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Executive Secretary
Domestic Geographic Names

UNITED STATES
BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

CASE BRIEF (Domestic)

San Gabriel Mountains: range; elevation 10,064 ft; in Angeles National Forest/San Gabriel Wilderness/Sheep Mountain Wilderness/Cucamonga Wilderness; extends from Cajon Pass on the SE, along the SSW edge of the Mojave Desert and Antelope Valley, then NW to include Liebre Mountain, Sierra Pelona, and Sawmill Mountain, SW of Pine Canyon Road and NE of Interstate 5; Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County, California; 34°17'13"N, 117°39'17"W; USGS map – Mount San Antonio 1:24,000 (highest point); Not: Cierra De San Gabriel, Qui-Quai-mungo, San Bernardino Mountains, San Gabriel Mountain Range, San Gabriel Range, Sierra Madre, Sierra Madre Mountains, Sierra Nevada.

http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gazpublic/getgooglemap?p_lat=34.2888927&p_longi=-117.6467218&fid=254210

Proposal: to change the application of a name to recognize reported local use

Map: USGS Mount San Antonio 1:24,000 (highest point)

Proponent: Wendy Reed; Quartz Hill, CA

Administrative area: Angeles National Forest

Previous BGN Action: San Gabriel Mountains (BGN 1927)

Names associated with feature:

GNIS: San Gabriel Mountains (FID 254210)

Local Usage: San Gabriel Mountains (USGS California Water Science Center; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; area residents; local, State, and Federal agencies; conservation organizations; hiking guides)

Published: San Gabriel Mountains (USGS 1940, 1969, 1978, 1982; USFS 1943, 1995, 2008; National Park Service; Geological Survey of California, 1865; Gannett 1914; *Geomorphology of the Southwestern San Gabriel Mountains of California*, 1928; *Gazetteer of the Mountains of the State of California*, 1929; Rand McNally Atlas 1947; American Guide Series, 1951; *A Guidebook to the San Gabriel Mountains of California*, 1963; *California Place Names*, Gudde, 1947, 1998; California Natural Resources Agency; South Coast Air Quality Management District; Wilderness Press; Pasadena Audubon Society; California Native Plant Society; San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy; Los Angeles County Department of Public Works; peakbagger.com)

Case Summary: This proposal is to amend the application of the name San Gabriel Mountains. In 1927, the BGN approved the name and defined the feature as “[M]ountains, California, Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties, between Los Angeles plains and Mohave Desert, and extending from Cajon Pass westward to San Fernando Pass.” The decision was rendered as the result of an inquiry regarding the official name of the range; several sources dating back to the 1860s had referred to it as San Bernardino Mountains, San Gabriel Range, Sierra San Gabriel, and Sierra Madre. A professor of geology at Pomona College asked the BGN to make official the name San Gabriel Mountains. In acknowledging the proposal, the BGN cited a draft manuscript published in 1914 by Henry Gannett that listed all the mountains of the United States; one of the entries was for San Gabriel Mountains, “defined as limited north and south by Mohave Desert and Los Angeles Valley; and east and west by Cajon Pass and Southern Pacific Railroad.” The proponent noted that the name San Gabriel Mountains had first been published by Josiah Whitney of the Geological Survey of California in 1865, although the name Sierra Madre was also widely

used. Whitney suggested the name San Gabriel Mountains was given “because they contained so many creeks and streams that were tributary to the San Gabriel River” (Hanna, 1951). Erwin Gudde, in his 1998 volume *California Place Names*, states “The mountain range was vaguely called the Sierra Madre by the missionaries, but a Cierra (Sierra) de San Gabriel is mentioned in Aug 1806.”

Sometime after the 1927 decision, presumably in the early 1930s but not through official BGN action, the extent was clarified to read “[extending] from Cajon Pass on the east to the Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Susana Mountains on the west, bounded on the north by the Antelope Valley and the Mojave Desert, and on the south by the community of Los Angeles.” This limited the feature to only those summits and ridges on the southeast side of Route 14 and Soledad Canyon, and within Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County.

Following the decision, the name San Gabriel Mountains began to appear on U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps around 1934. It was also listed in the *Gazetteer of the Mountains of the State of California*, published in 1929 by the Federal Board of Surveys and Maps. In 1937, the USGS suggested that the 1927 definition was somewhat vague, and although it did not wish for the BGN to revisit the case, asked that the definition be amended to read, “Between Los Angeles plains on the south, San Fernando Pass on the west, Soledad Canyon and Antelope Valley on the north, and Cajon Pass on the east, excepting the Verdugo Mountains.”

The approved name also was published in the 1946 volume *Dictionary of California Land Names* (Hanna) and in subsequent editions of Erwin G. Gudde’s *California Place Names*. The American Guide Series volume *Los Angeles; A Guide to the City and its Environs* (Second Edition, 1951) described the feature as “extending the 75 miles between Newhall Pass and Cajon Pass.” During the 1950s and 1960s, the BGN responded to several inquiries regarding the 1927 decision, each time reaffirming the official name and definition.

The Peakbagger.com listing for San Gabriel Mountains includes a map that shows the extent as defined by the BGN.

Despite eighty-plus years of usage as defined by the BGN, the Director of the Antelope Valley Conservancy, who submitted the current proposal, believes the name should be extended to also include a group of mountains and ridges to the northwest that includes Liebre Mountain, Sierra Pelona, and Sawmill Mountain, among others, extending nearly as far west as the Topatopa Mountains in Ventura County. The proposed definition would read, “Extends from Cajon Pass on the southeast, along the south-southwest edge of the Mojave Desert and Antelope Valley, then northwest to include Liebre Mountain, Sierra Pelona, and Sawmill Mountain, southwest of Pine Canyon Road and northeast of Interstate 5.” The proponent also believes the larger feature is more appropriate geologically; one definition states, “The San Gabriel Mountains (SGM) are part of the “transverse ranges”, an east-west trending belt of mountains that have been thrust up by compression of the crust at a “restraining” bend in the San Andreas fault.” She cites a USGS map of Southern California Earthquakes which “shows the subject mountains and the San Andreas Fault **and San Gabriel Fault** from which they form.” These massive mountainous elevations along the Rift Zone comprise the southern boundary of the triangular shaped USGS Antelope-Fremonts Valley Watershed 18090206. The Watershed does not feed or connect to the Santa Clara River Watershed, due to the continuous and unbroken elevation of the range. The saddle at the 14 Freeway, as evidenced by its elevations, is a high mountain pass not a valley. It offers no drainage to the watershed to the south.”

She further states, “Lastly, geographic name decisions may take into account real-world scientific and commonplace usage, common usage by citizens and government agencies of the region. Such decisions may also take [sic] into account homogenous biotic communities, geology, communities of interest, and governance, all of which are pertinent to this inquiry. In the region, even the smallest mountainous features are designated as Ranges. It seems inconsistent for such a major feature as the subject mountain chain, which covers perhaps 500 square miles, to neither be designated as a range, or to be incorporated within the SGM. Research does illuminate a variety of federal, state and local government entities, press uses, and public references that include the subject mountain chain as a portion of the SGM. Many of us in the region and up to our state capitol were surprised to learn that USGS does not include it in the SGM. The widespread belief is that it [is] the western portion of the SGM, particularly as the entire mountain range is consolidated as the Angeles National Forest under stewardship by the US Forest Service/National Park Service.”

Numerous conservation groups are named for the San Gabriel Mountains, but none of their websites provide a definition of what they consider to be the extent of the range. (Three wilderness areas fall within the current limits of the San Gabriel Mountains, but outside the area impacted by this proposal.)

The 1963 volume *A Guidebook to the San Gabriel Mountains of California* (Leadabrand) describes the feature as “part of the great high barrier that separates the Mojave Desert from the fair sea-bounded coastlands. Roughly east and west the range runs, with pronounced terminations at the east with Cajon Pass and 100 miles to the west at the natural trough followed by U.S. Highway 99.” Some of the features mentioned in the book include Sierra Pelona Ridge, Liebre Mountain, San Francisquito Canyon, and Elizabeth Lake, which suggests the author defines the extent of the range as proposed.

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Submitted by: same
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